

Life Hurts

Story: Life Hurts

Storylink: <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/7696034/1/>

Category: Lion King

Genre: Adventure/Romance

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Authorlink: <https://www.fanfiction.net/u/3365186/>

Last updated: 01/03/2012

Words: 9564

Rating: T

Status: Complete

Content: Chapter 1 to 7 of 7 chapters

Source: FanFiction.net

Summary: After the climatic battle for control of the Pride Lands, a lioness loses the will to live due to the death of her daughter. Can Simba and Nala convince her that life is still worth living?

***Chapter 1*: Chapter 1: A Terrifying Nightmare**

AN: Did you expect to have me back so soon? Once I start writing I can *never* stop, so I suppose that's good for you brilliant readers, isn't it? So here's the start of Series Two, with new adventures, new villains and of course, romance. As the old saying goes: cuteness to the max!

Life Hurts

Chapter One: A Terrifying Nightmare

The flames. They surrounded Simba from every angle, trapping him in some kind of fiery cage from which there was no escape. Everything felt so hot. The fires looked as if they were getting closer and closer to the cub, the possibility of being burnt becoming more and more probable with each passing second. Simba was going to be reduced to ashes.

Through narrowed eyes, Simba could make out a sinister figure emerging from the flames. A figure that Simba shuddered at the sight of, recognising him instantly. It was the slim, tall, proud figure of a lion clutching a golden staff with a cobra head, its red eyes glowing menacingly. The figure had a triumphant evil smile on his face as he stepped out of the flames and towards Simba.

It was the frightening figure of the madman Simba knew as Hago.

"You don't like what you see, do you, Simba?" Hago asked as a wide, evil grin spread across his face.

"W-what's h-happening?" Simba asked in a frightened voice, trying to back away from Hago, but failing because of the flames that threatened to engulf him entirely.

"You're losing, Simba," Hago replied as he got closer and closer to the terrified cub. "That's something you're not used to, is it?"

Simba didn't answer. All he could do was breathe heavily as he felt tears welling up in his eyes, knowing that this was the moment where he would die. It was inevitable. He was surrounded on all sides, and there was no way out. The cub would finally meet his end.

Hago chuckled, knowing he had Simba right where he wanted him. "Think about it, Simba. You can't escape. You don't have any little plans in that head of yours. You can't do anything, Simba. For once in your life, there's no way out."

"L-look," Simba stammered as he began to shake with fear, "I'm s-sorry."

"See? Now you respect me, because I'm a threat," Hago said as he took another step towards Simba, succeeding in making the cub even more frightened. "I applaud your efforts, but your luck has to run out at some point, doesn't it?"

Simba felt a lump in his throat as tears began to fall from his eyes, thinking about everyone he was going to miss. His mother, his father, and most importantly, Nala...

Of all the people he knew, Nala was the person he would miss the most. After all, she had done so much for him ever since they first met. She would be heartbroken when she heard that Simba was dead...

"Scared, Simba?" Hago taunted. "I recognise that look on your face. That was the look Nala had before I killed her."

Simba looked up at Hago. "W-what?"

"Yes, Simba. Nala is gone for ever. I made sure of that before I decided to murder you. I just wanted to break your heart before I delivered my final blow. How do you feel, Simba? Do you feel crushed? Do you feel like your heart has been torn in two? Ah, that's a shame, because I just don't care. Goodbye, Simba."

"N-no... p-please..." Simba pleaded as Hago got closer and closer, as well as the flames. Everything was closing in on him. "No... No... No!"

And then everything went black.

Simba shot up as he awoke, breathing heavily, thanks to the horrific nightmare he just experienced. It was actually hard to believe that it was only a nightmare. It was *that* horrible. It felt so real...

Simba took a few deep breaths, and just about managed to calm himself down. *Come on, Simba, it was only a nightmare*, he assured himself. *Just a stupid nightmare that doesn't mean anything. Hago's gone. He died, remember? There's nothing to be scared of. He's not coming back.*

Simba slowly managed to come back to reality, and knew what was what. That's right – Hago was dead, the Pride Lands were safe, and Nala was his girlfriend...

That made him feel instantly happier. Simba turned his head to the side and saw his creamy-furred, beautiful new girlfriend Nala was fast asleep next to him, resting her head on her paws and smiling, and it looked like she was having a wonderful dream.

"Figures..." Simba muttered with a smile. Nala always seemed to get the better side of things, and she wasn't even part of the royal family like Simba was! The Price of the Pride Lands had certainly taken quite a beating the previous night, and the scars and bruises were still visible.

Simba's black eye was still sore, his cuts still stung and his bruises ached from the battle he had valiantly fought last night. It was a battle he feared he wouldn't win, and a battle he feared would result in the end of his young life. However, Simba managed to go against the odds and become a hero. One of the greatest heroes the Pride Lands had ever seen, actually.

It had certainly been a rough two days for himself and Nala, that was for sure. It all started one evening when Hago and Scar teamed up, and together with an army of hyenas they brutally took over the Pride Lands. Using Hago's magical powers, he hypnotised the pride and reduced them to mindless slaves who would obey each and every command that was spouted from the two villains. The Pride Lands were pretty much doomed, to say the least.

However, Simba and Nala were the only two who managed to escape from the Pride Lands, and fled to the jungle, where they deliberated on what to do. After a while, they decided it would be best to try and save the pride from a lifetime of servitude. The Pride Lands were their home, and they weren't going to let greedy lions like Hago and Scar ruin it.

With a little help from Zazu and Hago's brother, Bora, Simba and Nala returned to Pride Rock, hoping to battle Hago and Scar in order to restore the kingdom to its former glory. Surprisingly, Hago betrayed Scar and killed him, leaving only Hago to deal with in order to save the pride from certain death.

Simba bravely engaged in a battle with Hago, and took a severe beating, earning several battle scars in the process. The fight climaxed atop Pride Rock, where Hago was sent tumbling into a fiery pit he himself had created earlier. Simba had saved the kingdom, and was hailed as a hero by the entire pride.

To make things even better, Simba decided to confess to Nala about a secret he had been keeping for quite a long time: that he loved her. Simba knew about his feelings for Nala for quite some time, and experienced quite a struggle in finally telling her those three little words. Either he found himself too scared to tell her, or something else always managed to get in the way. It was as if their love was forbidden.

However, after Simba defeated Hago and freed the pride, Simba and Nala finally told each other how they really felt. Both covered in blood and shedding tears, it was quite an odd time for them to tell each other such a thing – but it worked for them. They both learnt that their surroundings didn't really matter. The only thing that was important was that they were together.

From their first kiss together, the two cubs knew that they were going to enjoy a tremendously happy relationship together. They were the best of friends, and they were boyfriend and girlfriend – the relationship couldn't be any more perfect.

Simba smiled as he watched Nala sleep, and decided that it would be best for him to get some more sleep of his own. The memories of that nightmare still lingered in his mind, and Simba was worried about that affecting his ability to get back to sleep. Maybe if he just blocked out all images of it and concentrated on something happy he could get to sleep?

He seriously needed some time to rest and recuperate. He'd taken a heavy beating, and Simba wanted his wounds to heal up so he could go running around with Nala again. He wanted to go back to having fun, instead of having to battle villains with mental problems.

There was only one problem for Simba: *nothing* was ever that simple.

***Chapter 2*: Chapter 2: The Cutest Couple**

Chapter Two: The Cutest Couple

Nala had never felt happier. Right now she was snuggled up with Simba, her best friend and new boyfriend. She was sure that he was the person she wanted to spend the rest of her life with. It just seemed so right to her. Ever since she and Simba first met they just sort of... clicked. They were so alike in so many ways. From what they liked doing, to what they didn't like doing, to what they were afraid of... they could relate to each other on everything. Nala thought that she and Simba were an ideal example of the perfect couple. They loved each other, and no one was going to take that away from them.

When she finally awoke from a deep sleep, Nala yawned and stretched out, smiling when she felt the familiar feeling of Simba's soft fur against hers. She giggled, remembering the events of the previous night.

The battle that had taken place – the battle against Scar and Hago to take back the Pride Lands – seemed so horrible when Nala looked back on it, yet she couldn't help but think that some good came out of it. She wondered... if the Pride Lands were never enslaved, then would Simba have confessed his true feelings for her?

Well, Nala couldn't find an answer. She didn't really want to, either. She had her Simba, and that was all that really mattered to her.

The way he told her was so... romantic, too. They were snuggled up to each other and watching the sunset together. What more could you ask for? Sure, there was the little downside of them both being exhausted and splattered with blood, but if you looked past that you would find the scene rather charming.

Nala thought it was wonderful. For so long she'd wanted Simba to proclaim his love to her. After a while she just started seeing him in a different way. He sounded kinder, gentler, and he looked cuter. She still felt her heart melt at the sight of that tuft of fur on his head!

Nala rolled over so she was looking at Simba, watching him sleeping peacefully. He had an adorable little smile on his face as he nuzzled Nala softly in his sleep. Even when he was asleep he managed to be affectionate!

She decided to make his wonderful dreams a reality, and prodded him gently, causing him to roll over and mutter in his sleep.

"What's that, Nala? You want another cuddle? Oh, okay then..."

Simba then abruptly grabbed Nala, holding her as close to him as she possible could, resulting a smile from her. "Dream come true, eh?" she remarked aloud, causing Simba to suddenly wake up.

"Wait, what did I do?" Simba exclaimed as he looked left and right, not realising what he was doing. His eyes widened when he saw he was hugging Nala, and he laughed nervously. "Nala, this isn't what it looks like. We're only best friends, right?"

Nala rolled her eyes. "Come on, Simba. You couldn't have forgotten about yesterday, could you?" she asked him, causing him to smile in response.

"Nah," he replied, giving her a little lick on the cheek. "How's my beautiful girlfriend doing today?"

She giggled. "Better now that you're awake, my adorable little Prince" she replied, giving him a lick on the cheek back.

Simba blushed behind his fur, smiling bashfully and looking down at the ground. "Aw, thanks, Nala."

"How adorable," remarked a voice sarcastically from in front of the two cubs.

Simba and Nala turned their heads to see Zazu, who looked rather amused to see the cubs acting so romantic towards each other.

"Zazu, what are you doing?" Simba asked, annoyed that the Hornbill had interrupted their intimate moment together.

"Waking up, young master," Zazu replied as he rubbed one of his eyes with his wing. "I fell asleep here after you told your heroic story of how you saved the Pride Lands last night."

Simba laughed. "Oh, yeah. You were shaking throughout the whole thing. Who knew you were so scared?"

"I was *not* scared!" Zazu argued. "And if you say something like that about me again then I'll be forced to tell Nala your secret!"

Simba and Nala gave each other confused looks. "Uh, were you even listening to *anything* at all that was going on last night?" Simba asked. "I *told* Nala my secret. Turns out she was keeping the same secret herself."

"I never would have guessed," Zazu said as he folded his wings. "Still, at least that eliminates the little problem of finding someone to become your future Queen. Looks like the betrothal worked after all. I'm sure you'll be keeping the tradition when you take your rightful place as King now, hmm?"

"Wrong again, Zazu. If I have cubs then I'll let them fall in love with whoever they want to. Me and Nala just got lucky. Oh, and I'm gonna fire you, too."

Zazu looked outraged. "I beg your pardon! For your information, I'm the one who helped you take back the Pride Lands!"

Simba shrugged, giving Zazu a teasing smile. "Ah, well. That's life. Deal with it."

"But I... You..." Zazu groaned loudly and turned around before flying away, muttering to himself. "I've had quite enough of this. Maybe one day you'll find that I will be a great asset to you."

"It's not likely!" Simba called after him, before he and Nala fell about the ground laughing with each other.

"He can never take a joke, can he?" said Nala.

Simba smiled. "What do expect from ol' Banana-Beak? He didn't even bother thanking us for saving his life yesterday! He could have been eaten by Hago if we didn't do something. Then again, Zazu getting eaten doesn't sound like such a bad idea to me."

Nala giggled. "So... what are we doing today?" she asked, eager to go on her next adventure with Simba.

"I told you yesterday. We'll find somewhere *really* cool. And this time, we won't have any stupid hyenas getting in our way."

"Hey, who you calling stupid?"

AN: I think you can guess who's taken offence to Simba's little comment. I'll see you tomorrow with two more chapters. Leave a review if you're into that sort of thing.

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: Cute and Cuddly Moments

AN: Back for more, I see. Thanks again for the reviews, which means I'll write even more now! I think it's time for another cute moment, don't you?

Chapter Three: Cute and Cuddly Moments

Simba and Nala turned their heads to look at Banzai, who looked very angry upon hearing Simba's comment about hyenas being 'stupid'.

Simba laughed nervously at the hyena. "Oh, we didn't mean you guys *personally*. We meant all the, uh... other hyenas. Yeah, that's what we meant."

Banzai was about to open his mouth to argue with them when someone grabbed him by the throat, and he found himself staring into Shenzi's angry eyes.

"Banzai, are you upsetting the lions who kindly allowed us to stay here?" Shenzi asked, gritting her teeth. She and Banzai had only been living in the Pride Lands for just over a night, and *already* Banzai was stirring up trouble. She wondered sometimes why she even fell in love with him in the first place. That scruffy, stupid idiot! What made him appear so attractive to her?

She didn't think she would ever find the answer to such a question. Love was a very funny thing.

Banzai grinned innocently in response. "Uh, no. I was just... uh, you know, talking with them."

"Don't you lie to me, you... liar!" Shenzi told him as she gripped his throat harder. "You're gonna get us thrown out of here! Then what are we gonna do?"

"Starve to death?" Banzai suggested.

Shenzi rolled her eyes. "It was a rhetorical question, you idiot! You're not supposed to answer!"

"Oh, okay then," Banzai choked out. "Uh... I don't suppose you could let go of my throat by any chance, could ya?"

Shenzi sighed and released him from his grip. "Believe me, that's the least of your worries. Wait until I start giving you love bites."

Banzai chuckled and nodded. "I can't wait. Can I have one right now?"

"If you insist," Shenzi said with a seductive grin, before leaping on top of Banzai and licking him all over his face.

"Okay, this is the weirdest thing I've ever seen," Simba said with a disturbed look on his face while he watched the two hyenas kissing in the sickest way.

Nala shared the same look. "Uh... Simba? Can we get out of here before I throw up?"

"Sure thing," Simba replied before bolting out of the den, with Nala quickly following after him. "I'll race you to the water hole!" he called back, causing Nala to give him a challenging look.

"You're on!" she accepted, always up for a challenge. Whether it was chasing each other, or seeing who could pin who first, or racing each other, Nala was always ready and willing. She was quite an adventurous spirit. That was one of the reasons Simba adored her so much.

"I win!" they both declared as they dived towards the water hole. Unfortunately for Simba, he skidded too far and landed in the water hole with a huge *splash!* This, of course, caused Nala to burst into uncontrollable laughter.

Simba resurfaced from the water a few moments later, soaked from head to toe. Nala continued to laugh as Simba spat a fish out of his mouth and clambered back onto dry land, managing a small smile at her.

"Funny, huh?" he said.

Nala giggled in response. "Next time, *aim* for where you're going to land, Simba. Otherwise you'll be landing in the water hole a lot more times than you want to."

"Hey, Nala?"

"Yes, Simba?"

Simba pushed Nala into the water hole, before jumping in after her. They both laughed, and started splashing each other playfully.

"Oh, you are so fun!" Nala exclaimed, grinning happily. Anything she did with Simba was automatically fun, no matter what it was. Whenever his mischievous little mind came up with a plan, it was always sure to be entertaining in some form.

Simba grinned cockily. "I know! After all, I am the greatest cub who's ever lived."

"Can't argue with that," Nala agreed with a smile as she swam closer to him. "Why do you think I love you so much?"

Simba blushed at that compliment. "You're really great too, Nala. In fact, I don't think I'd be anything if I didn't have you."

Nala's heartbeat began to drastically increase when he told her that. *Aw... he is so sweet!* she thought to herself as she gazed into his eyes lovingly. *It's no wonder I love him. Who couldn't love someone as sweet and adorable as Simba?*

The two cubs closed their eyes and nuzzled each other affectionately, feeling like nothing could ruin this wonderful moment for them. Nothing...

"Having a nice swim?" asked a female voice from beside the water hole.

Simba and Nala turned their heads to see Nala's mother, Sarafina. She had a grin on her face after witnessing the two cubs having their rather intimate moment together.

Nala blushed at the sight of her mother. Whoops! She didn't expect something like this to happen. Why was it when she and Simba had a romantic moment together someone always seemed to ruin it? All she wanted was a little bit of a cuddle from him. Was that too much to ask for?

"Mom, what are you doing here?" Nala asked her mother, earning a little chuckle in response from her.

"Well, I was on my way to help Simba's mother with something when I spotted you two having one of your cute and cuddly moments together," she replied. "I couldn't resist watching for a little bit."

"Mom!" Nala exclaimed embarrassedly. "Do you always have to embarrass me like this?"

Sarafina nodded. "Yep! It's what my mother used to do when your father and I were trying to have a cute and cuddly moment together. I'm not one to break with tradition. And somehow I don't think *you* will when you get older, either."

"How do *you* know?" Nala challenged, receiving nothing but a simple smile from her mother.

"Nala, how many times do I have to tell you? Mother knows best," she said with a grin. "One day when you have a cub of your own you'll understand. That's *way* off, though. Start worrying about it when you become a teenager in about a year or two."

Simba and Nala looked at each other and shrugged. "What are you helping out with, then?" Nala enquired.

Sarafina suddenly had a gloomy look on her face. "Oh, it's quite horrible, to be honest. You see, there's this lioness in the pride called Tayari, and apparently her daughter was murdered yesterday."

Nala let out a tiny gasp. "By who?"

"I'm betting it's either Scar or Hago," Simba said as he put a paw to his chin, deciding which one of the two would most likely murder someone's daughter. "I'm gonna say Hago."

"It was Scar, actually," Sarafina informed him, earning an annoyed reaction from Simba.

"Damn!" he exclaimed. "And I was so close!"

"What happened to Tayari's daughter?" Nala asked, intrigued and concerned. "I mean, how did she die?"

Sarafina frowned. "I'd rather not say. It's not exactly something cubs like you should know about at your age."

"Is this like that question about where babies come from?" Simba asked curiously. "'Cause I'm pretty sure that Zazu delivers them."

This earned in a giggle from Nala. "You can be so silly sometimes!"

Chapter 4: Chapter 4: Death is the Only Answer

Chapter Four: Death is the Only Answer

Tayari felt like there was nothing left for her on this planet now. Everything had been taken from her, and she truly believed that. Everything in her life had been eradicated. It had all been stolen from her, never to be returned. For Tayari, her life had completely lost its purpose. She assumed that her purpose in life was just to be a kind, loving mother – but clearly that assumption wasn't a correct one.

No... her *true* purpose in life was to become a soulless, heartless, emotionless wreck, destined to be alone for the remainder of her life. Tayari didn't even see the point in living anymore. There was no point. What would she gain from living longer? What reward could there possibly be?

There was no reward to be had. There would only be more pain. More pain, more suffering and more depression for her to bear. All three of those things would increase in intensity as each day passed, and she would most likely descend into total insanity because of it. It was too much for her to take in. Too much...

The pain of remembering her mate, Koshoto, hurt enough. He'd been gone for a long time now – years, even – and it was hard enough for Tayari to look after her daughter, Uzuri, all on her own. But eventually, as the years went by it became easier and easier, and Tayari realised that she never needed her mate after all. She could take care of things all by herself. She was a strong-spirited, independent lioness.

Or so she thought until she heard the soul-crushing news that Uzuri had been murdered. As King Mufasa told her the grave news, she felt her heart break in two. All those years of work she'd done raising her daughter from a little baby to a young lioness had all been for nothing. They were pointless. Years of her life had been wasted trying to raise Uzuri. Years. And she would never get them back.

How much more bad luck could befall her? How could anything right now bring her lower than this? Tayari had hit rock bottom. Things were at their worst for her. She hadn't felt this way since she'd learned that her mate was gone. In fact, she felt worse. This was, without a doubt, the worst moment of her life.

It hurt so much. The sadness overwhelmed her. She loved her daughter, and to discover that she had been tortured horribly before she was killed made her insides burn with fearsome rage. She wanted to make the madman responsible for this suffering he had inflicted upon her daughter. She wanted to rip his insides out and make him eat them. She'd tear him apart until he was no longer recognisable. Revenge would be sweet.

But there wasn't a chance Tayari could get her revenge, because the madman responsible – King Mufasa's psychotic, tyrannical brother Scar – was already dead. Tayari hadn't heard the full details of how this had happened yet, because she was too busy crying her eyes out throughout the night. She cried so hard she felt like she was crying out *blood* by the end of it. It felt like her soul had been poured out of her body by her tears. She was a broken lioness.

She had no cause and no purpose. All she knew now was that her life was nothing but pain. Tayari didn't think she was ever going to be happy again. Nothing and nobody could cheer her up, because all her happiness had been drained right out as soon as she heard that Uzuri had been killed. From now on, Tayari was going to feel like nothing but an empty shell.

She wanted to die. That would be a blessed release for her. Death seemed so inviting right now to her. So beautiful, so wonderful. Death was the only answer. Maybe if she died then she would be reunited with her deceased daughter, and things could go back to the way they used to be!

Suicide seemed like the best idea she'd ever had right now. It wouldn't take long. All she had to do was use her well-sharpened claws, normally reserved for hunting purposes, to slash her own throat. One slash was all it would take. It would end her miserable existence, and she would be reunited with the ones she loved at long last.

After all, who was going to miss her? Nobody. Everybody seemed so ignorant and selfish to her. No one cared about her feelings. Instead they chose to care about themselves and how great it was that they were still alive after the Pride Lands had been freed by whoever had managed to save them. It was about time that this selfish pride showed some actual compassion for once.

Life wasn't fair. It hurt. Tayari's own existence made her physically *ache*. Nothing more would please her right now than to commit suicide and end her life. All the pain would disappear. She knew it. It was the only solution.

Death was the only answer.

"So, what are you gonna try and do?" Nala asked her mother as she clambered out of the water hole, closely followed by Simba.

Sarafina shrugged a little. "Try and cheer her up, I suppose. The poor girl had been crying her eyes out for the past night. It just sickens me that someone so cruel would do that to a little teenage lioness. Believe me, if that Scar wasn't dead then I'd teach him a lesson he wouldn't forget." Sarafina sighed, and managed a little smile at the two cubs. "Well, I'll see you later tonight. Try to keep out of trouble."

"See you later, Mom!" Nala exclaimed as Sarafina departed to make an attempt to cheer Tayari up. Somehow she knew that was going to be easier said than done.

"So, what do you want to do now?" Simba asked.

Nala shrugged. "I don't know. It's up to you, Simba. What do *you* want to do?"

Simba fiddled with the tuft of fur on top of his head as he tried to think of something they could do together. "Well... we could always find a really tall hill to roll down."

"Cool!" Nala exclaimed, grinning. "Let's go!"

The two cubs then bounded off in search of a tall hill they could roll down. Simba always had the best ideas.

Plus, the way he fiddled with his tuft while he was thinking was so cute, too!

AN: Well, at least I ended this dark chapter with *something* cute and fluffy, right? Yeah... this series is slightly darker than the last one, and I thought *nothing* could beat Moto's surprise death in *Army of Evil*. Oh well, I like surpassing myself.

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: No One Can Help

AN: Like depressing chapters? No? Oh well, you'll just have to stomach this one.

Chapter Five: No One Can Help

Tayari had hidden herself away from the pride since last night. She didn't plan on anyone visiting her, and she didn't *want* anyone visiting her. All she wanted was to be alone – and she planned on things staying that way for the remainder of her life. Not that there was going to be much left of her life anyway.

She was going to kill herself. She had to. She felt like it was her destiny, her true purpose. Her purpose in life was to die. That made her life pretty much pointless, but it didn't matter to her. Life was just too painful now. Tayari didn't have the strength to go on. She'd tried once before when her mate left her, and look where that got her. It only resulted in the death of her lovely daughter.

Unfortunately for Tayari, her hiding place turned out to be not exactly the most secretive one. But how could you blame her when her only child had been killed? She clearly wasn't thinking straight.

Tayari had decided to hide in the field with the tallest grass. Apparently it was a favourite of her daughter's, so it had some sentimental value. So she just sat there, crying and sobbing her heart out, feeling nothing but darkness and pain overwhelming her.

She looked up momentarily and could see two familiar faces approaching her – Queen Sarabi and Sarafina. Tayari would have called them friends back when Uzuri was still alive, but now she wanted no one to be her friend. All she wanted was to be left alone for all of eternity. Nothing could help her, so why should anybody try?

"Tayari?" Sarafina spoke softly, giving her a sympathetic look. Sarafina always thought it was in her best interests to help others, and that was partly the reason why she had made friends with Tayari in the first place. She had undergone a tough time before she moved into the Pride Lands, and although Tayari tried to appear independent, she sometimes came across as quite emotionally stressed.

Sarafina herself had been quite depressed herself when she moved into the Pride Lands, but she was that little bit stronger, and finally managed to more or less get over the death of her mate, even if the memories still hurt a little. She wasn't the first person to show her pain. She much rather preferred to hide it.

Tayari just stared at the two lionesses with her bloodshot blue eyes, and frowned. "What do you want?" she asked, her head sinking back down to the ground miserably. She was in no mood whatsoever to talk to them, and wanted to get rid of them as quickly as she could.

"We want to help you, Tayari," Sarabi replied, managing a small smile at her. Tayari seriously needed some guidance to help her through this troubling time, and Sarabi and Sarafina both knew that they could help her if Tayari would just let them. However, getting her to agree was going to be decisively difficult.

"I don't need your help," Tayari spat angrily. "I just want to be left alone for ever. Is that too hard for you to understand?"

"You *do* need help, Tayari," Sarabi insisted. "If you'll just allow us, then we can make things better for you."

"No one can help me now," Tayari informed them as tears fell from her eyes for what felt like the millionth time. "I don't know who I am anymore. I don't know what to do. I'm nobody. There's no point to my existence. I just want to die."

Tears streamed down her face silently as Sarabi and Sarafina looked at each other, and they both came to realise that Tayari truly had lost hope for everything. She was so upset and distraught that she didn't even want to live anymore. She was suicidal, and the two lionesses feared that she would take her own life very soon if someone didn't convince her otherwise.

"Tayari, just say yes and we can help you. You need someone to guide you through this troubling time," Sarafina told her gently. "I know how you feel."

"No, you don't!" Tayari snapped. "No, you don't!"

"I do, Tayari. My mate died before I came to the Pride Lands – in fact, that was the *reason* I came to the Pride Lands. I couldn't bear the memories. I know what death feels like. It's horrible."

Tayari managed a single nod in agreement. "I can't take it anymore. I just want it all to end."

"You can find the strength to carry on," Sarabi assured her. "If you just try."

Tayari seemed to consider it for a moment, but she then shook her head, dismissing the idea. "No. I have no strength left. After Koshoto left me I barely had any strength at all, but I just about managed to raise Uzuri all on my own. Now that she's dead, I have nothing left. My soul is gone." She stared into Sarabi's eyes. "You might as well kill me."

"No," Sarabi said firmly. "Suicide isn't the answer, Tayari. You'll be sorely missed if you do something so foolish. Why end your life when you have so much to live for?"

Tayari laughed. "So much to live for?" She shook her head. "No. I have *nothing* to live for. Don't you understand? The only thing that made me want to live is my daughter, and now she's gone! What else is there to keep me here? Do you want me to live out the rest of my pathetic life feeling completely miserable? Is that what you want? To see me suffer?"

"Please, Tayari, just think about it. We can show you that there's so much left for you here. Please," Sarafina urged, a desperate look in her eyes.

"I don't care how much there is," Tayari said as she rose to her paws, taking a deep breath to hold back her tears. "You can't stop me, so there's no point in even trying. I'm going to end all this misery once and for all."

Tayari then turned around and walked away. Sarafina and Sarabi tried to follow her. "Tayari, you—"

Tayari turned around and lashed out at the two with her claws, growling furiously. The two lionesses backed away, narrowly avoiding getting slashed by Tayari. "Don't try and stop me, or I won't be the only one who's going to die today," she warned, meaning every word of it.

Tayari then sprinted away, leaving Sarabi and Sarafina standing there helplessly, unable to do anything to make Tayari change her mind.

"Do you think she'll actually do it?" Sarafina wondered, watching Tayari disappear into the distance. "Will she actually kill herself?"

Sarabi nodded gravely. "I think so. She's distraught. She isn't thinking clearly. Tayari will do anything in that kind of vulnerable state. You saw what she did when we tried to follow her. She threatened to murder us." Sarabi sighed sadly. "I don't think anyone can help her now."

***Chapter 6*: Chapter 6: More Heroic Business**

Chapter Six: More Heroic Business

"Okay, so I closed my eyes and rolled the wrong way," Simba said to Nala. "How does that make it *my* fault?"

Nala rolled her eyes. "Oh, I don't know, maybe because we're about to fall from the edge of a tall cliff to our deaths?"

Simba laughed nervously. "Oh, yeah. I almost... uh, forgot about that for a second there."

"You gotta be kidding me!" Nala exclaimed. "How can you forget about it when it's happening right now?"

Simba's claws were digging into the edge of the cliff they were hanging from. Nala had one of her paws holding onto his tail, which just about prevented her from falling to her doom.

"Would it make you happy if I pulled you back up?" Simba offered, grinning at her.

"Yes, it would!" Nala replied. "*If* you can pull us back up!"

"Come on, Nala. I thought you trusted me. You know I can pull us back up," he assured her confidently.

"Just do it quickly!" Nala urged. "I can't hold onto your tail for much longer!"

Simba nodded. "Yeah. My tail already feels like it's falling off. I guess I'd better pull us up."

"Yes, *please* pull us back up!"

Simba, using all of his strength, managed to pull himself back up onto the edge of the cliff and to safety. He glanced down and saw his tail was still draped over the edge, and Nala was still hanging from it.

"Come on!" Nala shouted, starting to get a little worry as her grip on Simba's tail started to loosen up a bit. "I don't think I can..."

Nala gasped as she lost her grip and begun to fall, only for Simba to grab her paw and pull her to safety. She hugged him tightly when Simba pulled her up, grateful that he had saved her life.

"Thank you!" she cried as she hugged him. "I got worried for a second there."

Simba stared into her eyes. "You never need to be worried when I'm around," he assured her. "I'm your hero, right?"

She hugged him a little tighter and nuzzled his chest affectionately. "Yeah. You're my hero."

Simba smiled as he felt his heart begin to warm. "Hey, I got an idea. Why don't we try rolling down the hill with our eyes *open* this time?"

Nala giggled and looked up at him. "Yeah. That sounds like a good idea to me. And don't forget to roll the *right* way this time. I don't want to roll off the edge of that cliff again."

"Got it," Simba agreed as he turned around to face the steep hill they had been rolling down for the past hour. It had to be the tallest hill in the Pride Lands, and it was a whole lot of fun for the two cubs. On the plus side, there was no one around, so they had the whole area to themselves. The other cubs in the pride didn't exactly have the same adventurous personalities as Simba and Nala did, and much rather preferred to sit around lazily by the water hole all day, talking about boring things. It didn't surprise Simba and Nala one bit that they weren't friends with any of them.

Nala stared down at the bottom of the hill, and a sneaky grin crossed her face as she pounced at Simba and together they tumbled down the hill, laughing and giggling playfully as they did so.

The two cubs collapsed in a heap at the bottom of the hill, still laughing. "What did you do that for?" Simba asked Nala through laughter.

"For fun!" she exclaimed, grinning, which caused the two of them to laugh even harder.

However, the two cubs soon stopped laughing when a voice cut through the air like a knife.

"Move out of my way!" a female lioness growled rudely as she barged past the two cubs. Simba and Nala noticed that she had bloodshot eyes, presumably from crying a lot. She also looked rather depressed.

The lioness continued on her journey, leaving Simba and Nala staring at her, wide-eyed and feeling rather confused.

"Who's that?" Simba whispered to Nala as they watched the lioness walk away.

Nala shrugged. "I don't know, but I'd like to find out," she said as she rose to her paws, before following the lioness.

Simba hopped to his paws and followed after her. "What do you mean?"

"Let's follow her," Nala suggested. "I want to see what she's doing."

"Why?" Simba asked, not quite understanding the point of following this visibly distressed – and also rather rude – lioness.

"It'll be an adventure," Nala replied. "Plus, I want to know why she looks so upset. I think she might be that lioness my mother was telling us about earlier. What was her name now...?" She thought for a moment. "Tayari! That was it!"

"She looked pretty angry to me," Simba recalled. "What if she sees us following her and kills us?"

"She wouldn't kill us," Nala assured him. "Besides, if she even tried then you'd protect me, wouldn't you?"

Simba fiddled with the tuft of fur on his head thoughtfully. "Uh... I guess so."

"Then we have nothing to worry about," Nala said as she quickened her pace to catch up with the lioness.

"Where do you think she's going anyway?" Simba wondered as he watched the lioness walk. "Last time I checked everyone in the pride pretty much stayed in the Pride Lands. This is close to the Outlands," Simba noticed.

Nala suddenly had a worried look on her face as she looked upwards. "Oh... I think I have an idea."

Simba followed her gaze, and saw that she was staring up at an enormous cliff in the distance. A cliff that put the tall hill they had been rolling down to shame.

"Uh... Simba? Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" Nala asked as she stared up at the humongous cliff.

"That we should forget all about this and go back to the hill?" Simba answered, smiling innocently.

"No, silly! I think... I think she's going to try and kill herself," Nala admitted. "She's going to jump from the top of that cliff."

"How do you know she's not just going up there to look at the pretty view, huh?" Simba asked. "Do we always have to think the worst thing that could possibly happen *is* going to happen?"

"Simba, let me ask you this: are we ever that lucky?"

Simba thought for a moment. "No."

"Then *that's* why we always have to think that the worst thing that could possibly happen *is* going to happen," Nala explained. "Understand, now?"

Simba nodded. "Yes. So what are we supposed to do about it?"

"Stop her, duh!" Nala exclaimed, playfully tapping the top of his head. "Is your brain still in there, because I can't tell!"

Simba groaned and looked up at the sky. "Do we ever get a break from this hero business?"

AN: Looks like it's up to our two favourite cubs to prevent Tayari from killing herself. Can they do it? You'll have to wait and find out, won't you? Just keep in mind that reviews make me update faster. You'll get your ending quicker then!

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: The Edge of Life Itself

AN: Will Tayari kill herself, or can Simba and Nala convince her otherwise? Only one way to find out...

Chapter Seven: The Edge of Life Itself

Tayari stood on the edge of the cliff, staring down at the drop below, assuring herself that as soon as she leapt from the edge her life would be over. All the pain and suffering she had gone through would finally come to an end. She would die, and that fact didn't bother her one bit, because it was what she wanted. She wanted to die more than she'd wanted anything else in her entire life.

Tayari closed her eyes, ready to fall to her inviting doom. She took a deep breath, and slowly exhaled. She wanted her death to be as calm and peaceful as possible. There was going to be no turning back now.

She could hear the wind blowing softly all around her, making the area seem rather lonely. She was all on her own, ready to die. The setup was perfect. One jump and all her problems would be over. She would be reunited with the ones she loved at long last.

Tayari bent her body slightly, and was about to leap from the edge of the cliff and to her death when she heard movement coming from behind. She turned around to find herself staring at two cubs. The male cub had golden-brown fur and auburn eyes, while the female had creamy fur and teal eyes. She recognised them as the two cubs she had barged past earlier on her way to the cliff.

Tayari knew who they were – Prince Simba and Nala. Quite frequently Tayari and her former friends Sarabi and Sarafina would comment on how adorable the two looked as a couple, and Tayari also knew that they were betrothed to each other. It was as if they were meant to be together...

The only thing that Tayari wanted to know right now was this: why had they followed her here? What could they possibly gain from that? Well, there was only one way for her to find out.

"What are you doing here?" Tayari asked the two cubs, sounding rather annoyed at seeing them here. Why did everything have to get in the way of her death? She just wanted to die in peace!

"Well... we just wanted to talk," Nala replied, eyeing her up and down and noticing how heartbroken she looked. "You're Tayari, aren't you?"

Tayari stared at Nala for a few moments, then nodded slowly. "Yes. I'm Tayari. Why do you want to talk to me? I have nothing of interest to offer you."

"We just noticed you looked kinda sad," Nala told her. "We wanted to see if we could... you know, help?"

Tayari scoffed in response. "You can't help me. *No one* can help me."

"Whys that?" Nala asked sympathetically. She was good at dealing with people when they were upset. She recalled this one incident that occurred a few weeks ago when Simba had woken up in the middle of the night. By chance, Nala happened to wake up around the same time and noticed he was sitting in the corner of the den, crying softly. When she asked him what was wrong, Simba replied that he'd had the most horrible nightmare, and it was something he didn't want to talk about ever. Nala didn't try to pry all the details from him – instead, she was on hand to offer him a big hug and a shoulder to cry on. Nala knew how to deal with people when they were depressed.

"Don't you know?" Tayari replied. "I bet *everyone's* talking about me. Did they tell you I was crazy? I wouldn't be surprised."

Nala shook her head and smiled. "No. No one's said anything to us."

"My daughter died," Tayari explained. "That... monster Scar did horrible things to her before murdering her in cold blood. And... it broke my heart. More than when my mate was stolen from me."

"Your mate died?" Simba said softly. "Oh... I'm sorry."

Tayari laughed. "He's not dead. He just left me for another lioness. Someone who he 'loved more than me' apparently. I thought I wouldn't have the strength to go on after that, but the thought of my daughter being without her mother was something I couldn't bear, so I decided to raise her all by myself. I got the hang of it after a while, and then... she died."

Tayari frowned, a look of anger forming on her face. "I'm just sorry that I never got the chance to tear Scar's throat out for what he did to my wonderful child. But I suppose thanking the person who *did* kill him would satisfy me enough."

Simba frowned and looked away from Tayari. *I don't think you'd want that*, he thought to himself, knowing that the person who killed Scar was Simba and Nala's greatest and most fearsome foe, Hago. By the time the events of the previous night came to an end, Simba believed that Hago was actually *eviller* than Scar, because he was willing to kill his own companions in order to gain more power for his own greedy self. Especially after that gruesome nightmare he'd had while he was sleeping...

But maybe Simba had perhaps got it wrong. Scar had himself caused a lot of death, and had done the most horrible thing to an innocent lioness. He'd also killed his own hyenas and – if Simba hadn't stepped in to save the Pride Lands – was going to cause a lot more harm than just that. Maybe Scar was the eviller of the two... Or maybe they were equally evil. Simba couldn't decide, and didn't particularly want to. He just wanted to put all that grisly business behind him for good.

"Now I just want to die," Tayari continued, finding it hard to believe that she was confessing all of this to two cubs she vaguely knew. "I can't take it anymore," she said as tears began to well up in her eyes, the intense depression returning to her once more. "I just want to go."

"You don't have to kill yourself," Nala told her. "What good will that do?"

"There's nothing left for me here," Tayari replied. "And if I die then I will be finally reunited with Uzuri. I won't have to suffer anymore. There's a better place waiting for me when I die. I believe that."

"But would Uzuri want that?" Nala asked, bringing up quite an important question. Not only was Nala good at dealing with people who were sad, but she was also good at convincing people. Simba had taught her plenty about *that*. "Would she want you to die?"

"I don't know what you mean," Tayari lied, turning away from Nala and back towards the edge. She didn't want to hear any of this. She didn't want to be convinced that it was right to carry on living.

"I think you do," Nala told her, taking a step closer. "Would Uzuri want you to die when she knows that you could still do a lot more with your life?"

"And how would you know that?" Tayari spat. "You're just a cub. You haven't seen the horrors of death like I have."

"We've seen a lot of death, actually," Simba informed her. "Sometimes people we actually *liked*. Like Moto. Sure, he was a bit of a jerk to begin with, but eventually he turned into a nice guy. But then Scar killed him. He was only the same age as us. Then Scar was killed by Hago and then I... killed him, sort of."

Tayari couldn't help but laugh. "*You* saved the Pride Lands? You two little cubs?"

Simba and Nala both nodded. "In our case, size doesn't really matter," Simba told her. "You can do just about anything if you try."

"And you can try and move on," Nala assured her. "If you'll just let the pride help you. I'm sure you've got good friends there, like my Mom and Simba's Mom. They'll look after you."

"But I don't want friends!" Tayari insisted. "No one can give back what I've lost. I feel so lonely."

"Well, we know what that feels like," said Simba. "We were pretty lonely before we met each other. Isn't that right, Nala?"

Nala nodded and put her paw around Simba. "I'd be pretty lost without him. Before I met Simba I didn't have any friends at all. When I first met him, I learned that he was the only friend I ever really needed."

"So you're saying that if I try I can make things better?" Tayari said, finding such an idea hard to believe. "What makes you so sure that'll work?"

"It's the only way," Nala replied. "My Mom managed when my Dad died, and I'm sure you can find a way to manage too. I know it's hard, but you should at least give it a try."

Tayari looked down at the ground, and considered it for a moment. She hated to admit this, but those two had a point... and a very good one, too. Maybe she could find that life was still worth living... if she tried.

"I'll... I'll think about it," Tayari told the two of them. "I'd just... like to be left alone to gather my thoughts."

Nala smiled. "Okay. Come on, Simba."

And with that, the two cubs turned around and headed away, leaving Tayari on her own with a choice: turn around and head back to the Pride Lands, or jump from the edge and end her life.

It was totally her choice. What was she going to do?

A few hours later, Simba and Nala had been happily playing with each other in the den, trying to see who could pin who first, in a game they had decided to call Pinned Ya!

However, their fun was interrupted when Sarabi wandered over to the two cubs with a sad look on her face, and had delivered the bad news that Tayari had jumped from the cliff, and killed herself.

The news had struck Simba and Nala like a spear through the heart. They didn't expect it, and it actually made them hurt a little inside, especially after all that trouble they had gone through to try and get her to see what good she could make in her life if she had only decided to try.

After Sarabi left the two of them alone, Simba and Nala just sat silently in the den, staring down at the ground gloomily. They had failed to save the life of someone who just needed a little bit of guidance in order to survive, even though they had tried their best.

But clearly, their best just wasn't good enough.

"Simba? Are you okay?" Nala asked, breaking the seemingly never-ending silence.

Simba looked up at Nala and simply shook his head, a sad look on his face. Nala got to her paws, walked over to him and hugged him tightly, closing her eyes and nuzzling his head. Simba hugged her back and did the same.

They sat there for a few minutes just being in each other's company, knowing that, even though they had failed to save the life of someone, there was still always something to look forward to in life, whatever it may be.

There was always a reason for them to keep on living, and that was something they were never going to forget.

The End

AN: That was sad, wasn't it? I'm welling up, here! I'd simply /ove to hear your thoughts on that rather bleak ending, and whether you expected it or not. Maybe I shouldn't be so dark in future stories, huh?

NEXT TIME: Simba and Nala wake up one morning to find they are in each other's bodies. Can they find the mastermind behind this and have it reversed before it is too late?